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## Report on 1970-1971 USO Tour by Minor Rootes

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## REPORT ON OVERSEAS TOUR

### 1. FACTUAL DATA

#### a. Name of Play

Variety Show Now

#### b. Performance Running Time

Originally our company was to perform the musical Carnival, but due to the weight problems of the equipment and to the subtle nature of the play we decided to concentrate on the variety show. We did take the puppet booth, puppets, props, and limited costumes for Carnival for bases that wished the play performed but after discussing the problems with each base guide he readily substituted the variety show for Carnival.

Performance running time varied from one hour to an hour and a half with no intermission. The short performances were done primarily to tight time schedules and occurred early in the tour.

#### c. Cast

The cast consisted of six men, eight women, and one faculty

#### d. Length of Tour

The length of the tour was five weeks at which time we covered approximately 9,000 miles.

#### e. Geographical Area Covered

Geographical area covered was Greenland, Labrador, Newfoundland, and Iceland.

#### f. Date Tour Began and Ended

We began on the 15th of June and ended on the 21st of July.

#### g. Number of Performances

Thirty performances were given.

## 2. PREPARATION FOR TOUR

### a. Selection of Participants

Students were originally selected for their ability to perform in Carnival. Consequently, fifty percent of the group was composed of music majors. We had one member who was a math major and another a french major. We suspect that the warm reception we received was due particularly to the diversified interests. The participants were chosen in open trials.

### b. Production Organization

Each member of the group was given specific duties to perform outside of the actual performance. Those roles are listed below.

1. stage manager
2. traveling manager
3. two costume mistresses
4. publicity and historian
5. three stage crew
6. Music Director
7. two writers preparing new material suitable for each base.
8. sound technician
9. make-up mistress
10. properties mistress
11. supervisor - faculty

### c. Preparation

Instruction given to the cast in reference to the area they would be touring.

### 3. EQUIPMENT CARRIED

All equipment packed into five trunks of varying sizes. The total weight was 520 lbs. The set consisted of 1. aluminum pipes which created frames and over which painted muslin was stretched. 2. An aluminum pipe and muslin puppet booth, and 3. the trunks themselves painted in bright carnival fashion. The screens were never used since Carnival was never performed but the puppet booth act was included into variety show. Additional equipment consisted of two battery powered amplifier and speakers, two microphones and two stands. Sundry equipment consisted of a tool chest, a small first aid kit, gels for lighting systems that might exist in places we played, and a miniature ironing board and sewing kit. Costumes were carried in individual luggage of each performer.

### 4. TRAVEL REGULATIONS, CONDITIONS AND PROBLEMS

I have read several reports of overseas travel and all of them have recorded minor complaints of one sort or another. Since our group is from Maine and most of the participants had not travelled to any great extent, they had little experience for comparison to previous treks. The initial day was long and we were in transit for a total of 21 hours. If this did not discourage them nothing would, and it did not. At Sondrestrom three of the group got ear infection - we suspect from the swimming pool - and they should not have flown for several days. Both one young man and a woman were in serious pain and should have been warned about flying when they had a ear ailment.

Though this was a minor point it should be brought to the attention of the people touring the Northeast command. There were only four women station at Thule. Consequently, at the time we were

there, the commissary did not carry tampax or sanitary napkins.

Recommended that the girls carry there own supply.

## 5. LIVING FACILITIES

At all times living facilities were good. Each person paid \$2.00 a night. In some bases one person was assigned to a room at others two people to a room. At Keflavik there were 6 to a room. The group was a bit spoiled at this point and complained mildly, but the conditions were suitable and better than what I have seen at some service bases.

## 6. PERFORMANCES

### a. Size and composition of audiences

The size of the audience range from 29 to 350 people. The composition depended upon where the performance was held. At times it was all male servicemen. In bases such as Goose or Argentia there are many families and small children. Our show was organized in a manner that it would adapt to the audience it was playing.

### b. Audience reaction

The reaction was good. Forms were distributed and sent to the AFTA offices. The show improved considerably from the first week to the last.

### c. Publicity

We carried a large number of throw-aways with us. These were not used for each base, some had done adequate publicity before our arrival using radio, TV, and posters. The effectiveness of their publicity cannot be determined. Quite often we received a limited



amount of people at the first show at each base. Word of mouth among the servicemen was our best publicity and the audience grew larger at the end of our stay at that base.

d. Cooperation of local staff

At all bases the cooperation was excellent. Buses were on time and tours were arranged.

7. ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

a. Social engagements:

b. Contacts with service personnel :

Following each show the company remained in the area and socialized with the audience whether they be service personnel, civilian personnel, or families. Our social contact must have been somewhat effective for our eight girls received a total of eight proposals of marriage, this excludes any other invitations they might have had.

c. Contacts with nationals of countries visited:

This was much more limited due to time and a scarcity of nationals on the bases. However, the company did have contact with both Danes, Icelanders, Newfoundlanders, and enough contact that one member of the group is planning to return to St. Johns, Newfoundland to teach.

9. COMPANY MORALE AND DISCIPLINE

The morale was high and remained so throughout the trip. Minor problems that arose were discussed in bull sessions and resolved. The faculty supervisor did not believe in stringent rules such as hours and dress codes. The company member were dedicated to the job and disciplined themselves quite adequately.

## 10. EDUCATIONAL VALUES FOR STUDENTS

### a. Evaluation

As mentioned before most of the people in the company had not travelled. This experience has been invaluable not only in relation to showmanship but to learning how to take care of oneself in a foreign place. The girls were spoiled a bit by the attention given to them but I suspect this will subside once they return to their homes and school. The group were exposed to attitudes which were foreign to them prior to the trip and they have digested these ideas which has helped to broaden them as people.

### b. Recommendations

I can make no recommendations about the educational values and say only it has been the most complete and total educational experience to a group with which I have been involved.

## 11. COLLEGE SHOWS AS ENTERTAINMENT

### a. Evaluation

Frankly a group succeeds through two methods. The first is to have a quality show that properly builds. I know from conversations with other touring groups that the variety show has often not been together at the last hour. Our<sup>s</sup> was done in this manner. More emphasis should be placed on the variety show than on the book show for it is the one that will be performed the most. The second ingredient for success is having a group of students who are willing to socialize rather than becoming a cliquish small society onto their own. These students in Maine have not been exposed to sophisticated manners as yet and consequently, are very open in their relations with others.

### b. Recommendations

One last recommendation is that each group should take a good amplifying system for often the halls are large and crowded.